

# CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 23, 2022 • WEEK 13



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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### *Verse of the Week*

Psalm 48:1-2

*Great is the Lord,  
and greatly to be  
praised, in the city of  
our God, His holy  
mountain. <sup>2</sup>Beautiful  
in elevation, the joy  
of the whole earth, is  
Mount Zion in the  
far north, the city of  
the great King.*

## Nehemiah: Builder with Commitment



**T**HIS IS THE REAL TASK BEFORE US: to reassert our commitment as a nation to a law higher than our own, to renew our spiritual strength. Only by building a wall of such spiritual resolve can we, as a free people, hope to protect our own heritage and make it someday the birthright of all men. – Ronald Reagan<sup>1</sup>

Making a commitment involves dedicating yourself to something, like a person or a cause. The Jewish exiles were committed to rebuilding Jerusalem, both outwardly and inwardly. This was not something they took lightly. Their allegiance was to God. In chapter 11 of Nehemiah, we read about their commitment to honor Him in any way He desired. This must have made God happy and proud, as He felt it was important to recognize the individuals and families who were faithful to His cause. God remembers and keeps account: “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints” (Hebrews 6:10). Undoubtedly, that is one of the reasons He lists names in this chapter of Nehemiah.

Pastor Arin Hess  
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## INTRODUCTION

“Never underestimate the importance of simply being physically present in the place where God wants you. You may not be asked to perform some dramatic ministry, but simply *being there* is a ministry. The men, women, and children who helped to populate the city of Jerusalem were serving God, their nation, and future generations by their step of faith.”<sup>2</sup>

In verse 1 and again in verse 18 of Nehemiah 11, Jerusalem is called the “holy city.” The word “holy” means to be set apart or sanctified. Jerusalem was the place that God had chosen for His earthly temple, the place where His people would meet with Him and worship Him. That was the reason that Nehemiah felt compelled to rebuild the walls of this Holy City. It was God’s city. Though the “new” walls could offer outside protection, Nehemiah knew that the city needed to be filled with people who would be able to protect it from the inside. Currently, there were not enough Jews living in the city to make it secure. God needed people in Jerusalem who were committed to Him and His work, so much so that they were willing to fight if necessary to uphold His honor and protect His city.

*Nehemiah 11:1-2*

*Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities. <sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>*

It would seem obvious and important that the leaders of the people live in the capital city, but more people were needed to maintain its security. So, Nehemiah, as governor, asked for one-tenth of all those living outside Jerusalem to move into the capital. Probably to be fair in the choosing, a lot was cast to determine who would move to the city. The lot would be determined by God, yet it appears that those chosen by lot also felt an inward desire to move. “What makes this significant is the word translated *volunteered*. It is a Hebrew word that means ‘to impel, to incite from within.’ Inherent in the word is the idea of inner generosity and willingness. In other words, down deep inside, these volunteers were stirred up; they were impelled by God to move. And they did.”<sup>4</sup> Whether leaders or commoners, they made the commitment to occupy and defend Jerusalem.

Note that the volunteers were “blessed” or praised by the other people. Why do you think that was? Would a move be easy? What might the volunteers have to give up? What challenges might they face? “Anyway, a sacrifice was made for the people of God. This poses a question: Is there ever a move we are called to make? Are there points where self-denial must take precedence over our ‘druthers,’ and when consideration of the people of God must be placed above our interests?”<sup>5</sup>

Many of you have left the comfort and convenience of your home to come to the capital city of Lincoln, Nebraska. You have been called to



provide “protection” for the people of our state and to honor God in so doing. We bless you for making that sacrificial commitment on our behalf.

## I. COMMITMENT TO THE CAPITAL CITY

*Nehemiah 11:3, 20-21*

*<sup>3</sup>Now these are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah each lived on his own property in their cities — the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon’s servants.... <sup>20</sup>The rest of Israel, of the priests and of the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own inheritance. <sup>21</sup>But the temple servants were living in Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the temple servants.*

Most of the Jews returning from exile probably chose to live in the place of their family inheritance. In some instances, that would have been in Jerusalem. More often, it was outside the city.

*Nehemiah 11:4-19, 22-24*

*Some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. From the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez; <sup>5</sup>and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite. <sup>6</sup>All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 able men. <sup>7</sup>Now these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah; <sup>8</sup>and after him Gabbai and Sallai, 928. <sup>9</sup>Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second in command of the city. <sup>10</sup>From the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin, <sup>11</sup>Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the leader of the house of God, <sup>12</sup>and their kinsmen who performed the work of the temple, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah, <sup>13</sup>and his kinsmen, heads of fathers’ households, 242; and Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, <sup>14</sup>and their brothers, valiant warriors, 128. And their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of Haggadolim. <sup>15</sup>Now from the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; <sup>16</sup>and Shabbethai and Jozabad, from the leaders of the Levites, who were in charge of the outside work of the house of God; <sup>17</sup>and Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the leader in beginning the thanksgiving at prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. <sup>18</sup>All the Levites in the holy city were 284. <sup>19</sup>Also the gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brethren who kept watch at the gates, were 172.... <sup>22</sup>Now the overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica,*





*from the sons of Asaph, who were the singers for the service of the house of God. <sup>23</sup>For there was a commandment from the king concerning them and a firm regulation for the song leaders day by day. <sup>24</sup>Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's representative in all matters concerning the people.*

Look back at verses 4-24. Note the varied jobs and occupations listed: overseers, second in command, leader of the house of God, performing the work of the temple, valiant warriors, in charge of the outside work of the house of God, leader in beginning the thanksgiving at prayer, keeping watch at the gates, singers, the king's representative. There were those with leadership gifts, administrative gifts, and serving gifts.

Alastair Begg said these people were recorded for us “not because of a *dramatic commitment to the spectacular*, but on account of their *devoted consistency* to the basics. We think we have to *go and do* something extraordinary. 99.9% of our life is *ordinary events*. Thus, we think life is *meaningless*. But here God celebrates those who live out their lives playing second fiddle. Spurgeon wisely says, ‘*It needs more skill than I can tell; To play the second fiddle well.*’<sup>6</sup>

“Every task was important and precious in God's sight. Nothing is obscure in God's sight if it is in His will and done for His glory. There should not be strife, envy, contempt, ill will, or jealousy in God's work. When we study 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-27, it is very evident that all who labor for the Lord are equally important, no matter the task. The important thing is that we apply 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 and Colossians 3:17.”<sup>7</sup>

There are truths in this for us today. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7):

We are to occupy for Christ — Luke 19:13.

We are to serve faithfully — 1 Corinthians 15:58.

We are to use God-given talents — Romans 12:3-15.

We are to buy up present opportunities. — Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:14-17.

“Every parable which Christ gave about talents or pounds had to do with faithful occupation for His glory until He comes again. As they were to occupy Jerusalem and keep it safe, so we are to give ourselves freely in service to God.”<sup>8</sup>

## II. COMMITMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

*Nehemiah 11:25-36*

*Now as for the villages with their fields, some of the sons of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its towns, in Dibon and its towns, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, <sup>26</sup>and in Jeshua, in Moladah and Beth-pelet, <sup>27</sup>and in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its towns, <sup>28</sup>and in Ziklag, in Meconah and in its towns, <sup>29</sup>and in En-rimmon, in Zorah and in Jarmuth, <sup>30</sup>Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba as far as the valley of Hinnom. <sup>31</sup>The sons of Benjamin also lived from Geba*



*onward, at Michmash and Aija, at Bethel and its towns, <sup>32</sup>at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, <sup>33</sup>Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, <sup>34</sup>Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, <sup>35</sup>Lod and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. <sup>36</sup>From the Levites, some divisions in Judah belonged to Benjamin.*

Though God had not designed for these Israelites to live inside the city of Jerusalem, He still wanted them to be friends and allies that could be depended on for support. They were not rivals but like-minded family members who were also serving God where they were. We need to be careful that we do not consider like-minded Christians as rivals just because they are not serving God in the same way or place that we are.

“Though it is a small, mustard-seed sort of beginning, can we not see in these mundane verses a renewing (even in dark, hard times!) of the place-element (i.e. land) of the Abrahamic covenant? Hence, there is a hint of the fidelity of God in the geography of Judah here.”<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Are you willing to move out of your comfort zone? What might God be asking you to do that will stretch you?

Are you willing to be used in any way that God wants to use you?

Are you living a life that is holy and pure? Have you separated from that which brings dishonor to God? Are you one of the redeemed who will inhabit the New Jerusalem one day?

Pastor Arin Hess



This map from <https://slideplayer.com/slide/10933061/> by Heather Green.



*Verse of  
The Week*

Psalm 48:1-2

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Mount Zion in the  
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FOOTNOTES

1. Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches*, Simon and Schuster, 2004, pg. 99.
2. Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 130.
3. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.
4. Charles R. Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*, Thomas Nelson, 1978, pg. 174.
5. Ralph Davis, "The Work of Consolidation, Part 1 (Nehemiah 11:1-12:26)," *Reformed Perspectives Magazine*, Volume 3, Number 30, July 23 to July 29, 2001.
6. Brian Bill, [https://www.preceptaustin.org/nehemiah\\_sermons](https://www.preceptaustin.org/nehemiah_sermons).
7. Edward Watke, *Building and Battling for the Lord*, Watke.org, 2002, pg. 30.
8. Ralph Davis, "The Work of Consolidation."
9. *Ibid*.

*Personal Study Notes*

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